The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

No. 23 APRIL 3rd, 1940

DEAR MEMBER,

I hope that the past five months have made it sufficiently clear to you that the central interest of the News-Letter is the coming to birth of a Christian society. There are, of course, a whole host of questions relating to what is meant by a "Christian" society. Some of these have already been opened up in the News-Letter; others I propose to examine before long. But so long as we know that the questions are there, a Christian society is the best brief description of our purpose.

The quality of a society depends on the quality of the people who compose it. The crucial question of what a society can do to help its members to be and to do the best that is in them has been the theme of the Supplements on 'Educating for a Free Society' (No. 14) and 'Education in a Christian Society' (No. 20). The discussion is carried further in this week's Supplement, which reminds us, among other things, that we have in this country an inspiring tradition. If we will appropriate it, enlarge and deepen it and apply it to the circumstances of our time, it may go a long way towards helping us to solve our problems.

The Supplement reminds us also of the danger of thinking of education solely, or primarily, in terms of the school. This is to lose sight of equally powerful and important social agencies. The greatest of these is the family. Its importance is emphasised in a pamphlet entitled *Evacuation,* prepared by the Anglican War-Time Group and published by the Industrial Christian Fellowship (The Moorings, Hindhead, Surrey. Price 2d.). Disregard of the claims of the family in the plans for evacuation and the public unconcern about this neglect is evidence of our present social purposelessness in vital human spheres.

THE AMERICAN CHURCHES AND THE WAR IN THE FAR EAST

Christian opinion in America is becoming increasingly sensitive to the fact that for two and a half years the United States has been the chief economic ally of Japan in its war on China. It is felt that America is involved in the devastation in Asia through the sale of essential war supplies to Japan. It is urged that the slogan "Keep America out of the war" needs to be supplemented by the slogan "Get America out of war in China." A letter has been sent to all the Protestant pastors in the United States urging them to consider the question of placing an embargo on the export of war materials to Japan. It is stated that with American aid over two million lives have been destroyed in the conflict, that between five and ten million further lives have been lost through the war and that more than sixty million people have been rendered homeless and destitute. The letter is signed by Bishop Ashton Oldham (president of the World Alliance for International Friendship), Dr. George A. Buttrick (president of the Federal Council of Churches), Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, Dr. John R. Mott, Dr. Robert E. Speer, and Canon Anson Phelps Stokes.

AN AMERICAN LAY VIEW OF THE CHURCHES

I have been sent a copy of the January issue of an American monthly magazine called *Fortune*. Its primary interest is in the world of business. This particular issue, however, contains a striking editorial article on the thesis that the failure of the Churches to teach absolute spiritual values will undermine civilisation. Written from the point of view of the layman, the article maintains that civilisation can survive only by faith in absolute spiritual values; that the Church is the guardian of those values; and that it is not guarding them.

The theme is illustrated by the attitude of the American Churches to war. In 1914 they were opposed to war as something wholly unChristian. In 1917 they supported war with such vehemence that it was remarked with bitterness by the troops at the front that if the Y.M.C.A. did not win the war the preachers at home surely would. Since then the Churches have repented, and are now against participation in war almost to a man. The wheel has come full circle.

The conclusion is that the Churches were not talking about the soul at all. They were talking about the same thing as the industrialists were talking about. The latter wanted in 1917 to save democracy by fighting; they want now to save it by not fighting. Their arguments and those of the Churches are in both cases much the same. The American people would do just as well to follow the advice of their industrial as of their spiritual leaders. The flock is leading the shepherds.

There is only one way, the article concludes, out of this perilous situation. "The way out is the sound of a voice, not our voice, but a voice coming from something not ourselves, in the existence of which we cannot disbelieve. It is the earthly task of the pastors to hear this voice, to cause us to hear it, and to tell us what it says. If they cannot hear it, or if they fail to tell us, we as laymen are utterly lost. Without it we are no more capable of saving the world than we were capable of creating it in the first place."

NARCOTICS IN THE FAR EAST

There can be no doubt that the tides are at present running strongly against the forces making for human betterment. During the past 50 or 60 years a long and largely successful fight was waged by voluntary organisations and governments against the growing, sale and use of opium. The British trade in opium with China was suppressed, and in China itself a large measure of success in combating the evil was achieved. A recent report from a reliable source, however, gives a distressing account of present conditions in Nanking and the surrounding occupied areas.

In Nanking, with a population of 480,000, there are 30 public stores where opium is sold and 173 licensed smoking-dens, while 14 hotels are known to have licences. There is also a large illegal trade which officials are continually trying to force into channels profitable to themselves. It is believed that the number of addicts is considerably over 60,000.

The Reformed Chinese Government in the areas occupied by Japan in the provinces of Kiangsu, Anhwei and Chekiang, receives a monthly income of 3,000,000 dollars from a tax on opium. This is its main source of revenue, and is declared by officials to be indispensable. There is reason to believe that over and above the sum derived from taxation an amount two or three times as large finds its way into the pockets of officials and others concerned with the traffic. The main source of supply is Manchukuo.

There has also been a large increase in the consumption of heroin. The number of addicts runs into tens of thousands.

It is evident that in these areas both the government and a considerable fraction of society have become dependent on narcotics. The Chinese may well ask whether this is the "New Order in Asia."

GETTING OR GIVING

Amid much justified criticism of the Church as an institution, it is well to be reminded that the spirit of devotion and sacrifice remains alive within it.

A letter has been addressed by the superiors of three Religious Communities to priests of the Church of England proposing the formation of an association to be called the Company of Mission Priests. It is directed to the question whether the Church can reasonably hope to maintain a ministry adequate to her needs upon the existing scale of clerical remuneration.

If the Church is content to affect directly only the lives of perhaps ten per cent. of the population and to regard its duty as done when provision has been made for the spiritual needs of the faithful, the existing numbers and organisation of the ministry may suffice. But if we consider the problem of winning back to Christ the masses in distressed areas living in dehumanising conditions; the needs of the monstrous growth of new housing estates which threaten to become new centres of heathendom; the task of rebuilding a Christian order of society; not to speak of the unlimited claims of the work of the Churches overseas—it is plain beyond question that the existing ministry is wholly inadequate for the fulfilment of these tasks.

If the average cost of maintaining a priest were £150 instead of £300 large reinforcements would become possible. The appeal is made, therefore, to those unmarried priests, who may not feel called to enter a Religious Order, but who are alive to the importance of this issue. It is proposed to form an association of such priests to help them in finding some practical expression of sacrifice and service; e.g., the staffing of a parish by a vicar and curates living a common life and sharing a common purpose. The aim is not to enable parishes to obtain services at less expense, but to increase the number of workers. One great gain would be the possibility of greater specialisation, allowing members of the enlarged staff to concentrate on meeting the needs of special classes in the community, such as students, hospital staffs, tramway workers, and so forth.

In a world in which people are occupied in the main with defending what they have, or trying to get what they have not got, we may draw encouragement from this manifestation of the opposite principle embodied in the revolutionary words of the Lord Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

By a slip in proof-reading in our last issue Professor Clarke was made to say the exact opposite of what he meant to say. Where the text says that he is disposed to disagree with Mr. Eliot, what he actually wrote was that he would *not* be disposed to disagree with him. Also the quotation from Falstaff should have read: "An' I have not forgotten what the inside of a church is made of—I am a peppercorn, a brewer's horse!"

Yours sincerely,

W. H. Clarke

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The following letter is from a vicar in the suburbs of London:

"Having had experience of working through cells I can see a ray of hope for the Church and nation.

"Times are so serious that I believe the Church has either to take the initiative and live dangerously or go under for some generations. She has been on the defensive far too long, and in consequence is getting nowhere. In some directions she has been very active devising schemes of social reform. In others she has escaped the real call of the day by being immersed in the minutiæ of worship.

"Then our divisions are a scandal to a world searching for a true ideal of community life.

"What I have in mind is a Christian England, Christian in character and outlook, where Christ is exalted as Lord and King.

"How is it to be achieved? Taking the areas into which the land is divided—i.e., parishes—you have ready to hand a centre and at least one paid agent. What is his job? Surely as Our Lord's was, to gather round Him a group of men and women and set them on fire with a vision of God. They become the centre of evangelism, living disciplined lives—'In the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.'

"Beyond them is a wider circle who need to be changed from nominal Christians to active Christians. Beyond them further still is the vast host of men and women, youth and children growing up without knowledge of God. How can they be reached by the group of disciples? Cell work.

"An experiment has been tried in a very thickly populated parish of between twenty-five and thirty thousand people. It began with a parish priest and two men, aged twenty-one and twenty-seven, who were converted. They prayed together and asked God to show them how they could best serve Him. They decided to ask three others. These six surrendered themselves to God and set out to win six others. So the cell began, and, being alive, it spread. After two years there were eight cells containing a hundred and thirty-two members. Each member on surrender undertook a disciplined life—worship, study, prayer and service.

"A meeting of the cell begins with Bible study, then it goes on into a prayer session (a prayer meeting), and concludes with a study of social and moral problems. Latterly this has had the Christian News-Letter as a basis. The effect of these cells is felt in every department of parochial life—Youth Fellowship, Senior Fellowship, Sunday School, etc., as well as in reaching those who are outside.

"For example, a member came across a friend who was perhaps indifferent or even hostile and invited him to come to a cell. A young Communist came, utterly scornful of the Church; he is being prepared now for Christian marriage. A young intellectual came; he was converted, and now as an officer has a cell round him in the army. Contact has been made with the Free Churches, and a new spirit of brotherhood has grown up.

"The war has scattered many members. One has begun a cell with the vicar of her parish in a reception area, and it grows. A business man, evacuated with his firm, has a group of clerks who meet for prayer every day before work. A youth in the R.A.M.C. has a group in his unit called a Christian Union."

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E CHRISTIAN
WS-LETTER

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The Supplement
No. 23

CAN EDUCATION SURVIVE ORGANISATION?

Mr. Eliot's paper in Supplement No. 20 serves both to raise ultimate issues which are in some danger of neglect, and to add new emphasis to issues which are already disturbing any complacency that may still be left in the minds of those who are directly concerned with the organised educational services of this country. It is the purpose of these notes to speak only of a deep uneasiness in the mind of one of the latter group.

The essence of it may be put crudely as a question: Can education survive organisation? The only novelty about such a question, in substance almost as old as education itself, is the peculiar menace of the conditions under which we have to ask it to-day. When a people has developed a great national system of schools providing for universal instruction of ever-widening duration and scope, and when, further, as is now the case, it begins to consider plans for guaranteeing equal access to the schools by all who can take what they have to offer, the danger (to use Mr. Eliot's words) of " the mechanisation which increases, while it manipulates, the atomisation of individuals," becomes both grave and imminent.

TENDENCIES TOWARDS MECHANISATION

The most obvious signs of such mechanisation are:

(1) The identifying of education with *schooling*. Few of us would fail to repudiate such identification when it presents itself nakedly. But how many of us accept it quite uncritically in practice, the more so as it is to the school record that so many of the rewards are attached?

One penalty for this habit may be the relative atrophy of social agencies other than school, from our failure to use them for their proper educational purpose. We need not cite examples.

(2) Bureaucracy, i.e., the exaltation of administration above teaching and of uniformities of policy above rich diversity of educative intercourse. Misconceived efforts to achieve equality may be particularly disastrous in this regard.

(3) The steady, though largely unperceived, degradation of educational aims to the level of scholastic success, even examination success. It is common, on speech days, to hear eloquent warnings against this danger. But—look around you.

Yet, unless catastrophe overtakes us, we cannot turn back. In particular the pressure towards equality will have to achieve its result since, in a society with such professions of faith as ours, it is justified.

THE MEANING OF EQUALITY

Many of us will share the editor's wish that a less abused word than education might be found to describe what we are really discussing. Would there not be a similar wish to find a less mathematical term than equality, one less open to crude manipulation by limited intelligences, to indicate our sense that the claim to education is a human claim rather than one of wealth or class? For what we are here concerned with is something qualitative, not truly quantitative at all. Might it not

be well to speak rather of eliminating *waste*, both the waste of individual possibility and the waste of attainable social power? Such a manner of speaking would at least have the merit of introducing the factor of *relevancy* to check and regulate the wilder vagaries of a misapplied equality. For waste may well ensue if it is thought that equality requires that A shall go to the same school as B, however irrelevant to A's needs and abilities the resources of the school may be.

If then in face of grave dangers that are already imminent, we are to increase the risk by an honest recognition of the demand for equality, what are the chances that we can come through safely?

In answer we will not attempt to take into account incalculable factors which, for better or worse, may come into play in the near future. We will here concern ourselves only with forces that are more directly calculable as having been long in operation in established practice and habit.

When we look at the administrative tradition of education in this country, at rooted institutional habit, and at time-honoured notions of civil liberty as they express themselves in forms of educational provision, we do find some grounds for hope.

A DEBIT ITEM

But before detailing some of these we ought to take note of one weighty item on the debit side of the account to which all too little consideration has been given. It is no small matter, and unless we do devote to it some wise and anxious thought the cloud like a man's hand may be the herald of a devastating storm.

In the field of secondary education we have in this country a tradition that was already centuries old before the State stepped in at the beginning of the century. Moreover, it was no merely local or national tradition but part and parcel of the whole scholastic tradition of the West, Christian, classical, and in its later stages tending to be aristocratic. When, in the nineteenth century, new classes rose to wealth and influence, the State, in spite of Matthew Arnold's urging, did nothing to provide for their education. So, English fashion, they did it for themselves, by causing the foundation of large numbers of new schools and the rehabilitation of some old ones. The result was not only a sharper drawing of the social line between the " secondary " education that was there for those who could pay for it, and the " elementary " which alone was available for those who could not, but a great strengthening of the conviction in a large and influential class that such " secondary " education was no concern of officialdom at all.

On the other hand, the great mass of the people, for whom only the elementary schools were available, took no part in the foundation and management of the schools which their children attended. First the Church and then the State conferred the benefit upon them from above, and though they created their own trade unions and co-ops and political parties, it is not on record that they ever succeeded in creating characteristic schools for their children.

When the State, in 1902, set itself to the provision of secondary education for select pupils from the masses, the schools thus resulting were as far off in any communal sense and came as much from above as the elementary schools. The result is inevitable: one section of the population, powerful in influence and wealth, is trained to deep suspicion of the State in all that concerns its own education, though it is ready enough to use the State for the education of the rest; the other section, powerful in numbers, is trained to rely on the State, State legislation, State funds, State administration, for all the benefits (including getting on in the world) that universal provision of schooling can bring.

Is there not here a product of history which, at this critical juncture, calls for a good deal more thought than it appears to have received?

ASSETS OF THE ENGLISH TRADITION

But there are many items on the credit side, both encouraging and weighty. We may conclude with a brief record of some of them.

(1) The law of England does not require attendance at school, still less at a school provided by the State. All it does is to impose upon the parent the duty of ensuring that his child is receiving efficient instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. School attendance becomes compulsory only on a magistrate's order, issued when the parent's neglect of his duty has been proved.

(2) Anyone can open a school provided he complies with local health and building regulations. The State has taken no power either to forbid the opening of a private school or to close one on educational grounds, nor can it insist upon inspection.

(3) Apart from a few special institutions the Board of Education provides no schools and employs no teachers. These functions belong to local authorities which exercise them with a large measure of autonomy.

(4) Elementary schools provided by Church bodies, in which the faith of the Church can be freely taught, are maintained from public funds. Recently the principle has been extended to cover substantial grants for building, if such building is to be used for a senior school.

Secondary schools similarly receive support if they agree to take a certain proportion of their pupils from elementary schools.

(5) The Board of Education prescribes no curricula for schools and training colleges.

In the elementary schools the curriculum is determined by the head teacher and the local authority, acting with the advice of His Majesty's Inspector. Its content and spirit are largely influenced by the liberal and courteously phrased "Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers in Elementary Schools," first issued by the Board in 1904, and progressively revised and improved since that date.

In secondary schools the primary responsibility rests with the headmaster or headmistress whose decisions are necessarily much influenced by the requirements of the School Certificate Examination.

Training Colleges have, for some years, been grouped around a conveniently placed university centre. The group settles its own curricula and carries out examinations, except the examination in practical teaching, which, for good reasons, the Board still supervises.

(N.B.—The position in the Training Colleges should be specially noted, in view of recent discussions on the preparation of teachers for religious instruction.)

(6) His Majesty's Inspector of Schools —a uniquely English figure—is not an administrative officer of the Board. He can issue no orders to any teacher or local authority. But the Board may not alter the smallest detail of his reports and must consult him on any action it proposes to take affecting his area. He is an officer of crucial importance working by influence, experience, and prestige and not at all by edict. There is no better clue to the working of English education than is to be found in an examination of his position and functions.

(7) The universities, though subsidised by the State to the extent of over two million pounds annually, are entirely free from any interference in internal affairs.

(8) Associations of Teachers, though they have no official status, exercise increasing influence upon policy, and in recent years have undertaken large scale researches into urgent practical problems.

(9) The modern English movement for adult education, though now liberally aided from public funds, grew up in complete freedom from State control. Adult classes choose their own curricula and select their own tutors and completely free discussion is of the essence of their functioning.

More items could be added, but enough have been given to afford evidence of a deeply-rooted and widely-ramifying spirit that is not a thing of yesterday and is still vigorously alive. So far as we are aware there is nowhere else in the world anything quite like it.

RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM

To remain true to this spirit in the complex planning that lies ahead, especially in meeting the demand for equality, will not be easy and will call for much restraint and even sacrifice. But it can be done and it must be done if the idea of education in a Christian society is to find fulfilment.

As Mr. Eliot says: "The scope of education is no longer the task of merely training individuals in and for a society, but also the much larger task of training a society itself—without our having any accepted fundamental principles on which to train it." So the spirit, of whose manifestation we have given examples, will have to operate yet more widely and self-consciously than ever. It must inform and inspire not only the working of the school system but the whole life and action of a people engaged in the task of reviewing its values and of expressing the result in new forms.

In this connection we shall do well to remember that in any free society the school system must learn to be *responsive* before it can become *directive*. It is a mistake to suppose that schools and universities, except on a very long and ill-defined view, can initiate great social changes. They can do only what the society they serve permits them to do. Sensitiveness to felt needs is their first essential. If they are thus sensitive they can do the great service of defining needs in terms of a concrete plan of training, and of so criticising and refining the often crude indications that society offers as to make the society more fully aware of its own better desires. They are refineries of the product of the social soil, not experimental forms for the propagation of quite new species.

Hence the great claim and obligation of all who are concerned with their work, which we may put as Responsible Freedom. So far as the school system is concerned there seems to be no other way of escaping the dangers which threaten than that of demanding this quality in our teachers and directors of education, and then guaranteeing the conditions necessary to its exercise.

Thus it may be that a Royal Commission on the selection and training of teachers will be found a necessary step in equipping ourselves for the trials we shall have to face.

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